

## THE MASTER'S TOUCH

By Frank Filson.

"Ach, you make me tired!" said Bittelman, leaning back in his swivel chair before his desk in the opera house offices and exhaling a cloud of fragrant smoke. "You make me tired, Mr. Clough."

"But the girl is a genius," exclaimed his wealthy patron excitedly. "I tell you, Bittelman, you'll miss the



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sensation of the season unless you let her play."

"Ach, you enthusiast!" exclaimed the director elegantly. "Genius! There has been no violinist who was a genius since Lemarsky died. Nowhere outside of Poland can there be a violinist who is a genius."

"Well, Miss Helen is a Pole," interrupted the other rudely. "Let me tell you about her—"

"All right, go on," said Bittelman resignedly. He knew that he could

not afford to offend the millionaire, whose enthusiasms were, nevertheless, the bane of his life. Every week Clough was discovering a new genius, and every week Bittelman was turning him or her away with mutterings of execration.

"It's like this, Bittelman," began the millionaire. "Last Monday night I was walking home from my club. I saw this street musician—pretty-looking girl, only about twenty. She was playing Liszt's Rhapsody—"

"Himmel! That's what they all play!"

"In the street, and there was a crowd listening. They didn't know that the finest living violinist in America was entertaining them for a few pennies. But I know it. I have heard Joachim and—"

"Have you heard Lemarsky?" inquired Bittelman sourly.

"I have!" cried Clough triumphantly. "And it was her playing that reminded me of Lemarsky. I had a talk with her. She wouldn't tell me her name at first, then said it was Braun. It seems she's of a fine Polish family and won't degrade the name as she says, by having it known that she plays on the streets for a living. And she's all alone in the world and—"

"Enough!" shouted the irascible Bittelman, springing to his feet. "Now listen, Mr. Clough. If I'm to remain director of the opera house I don't listen to any more penniless geniuses, and tell them they're no good and can't play no better than a cat. It upsets my digestion and makes me cross. Now, if you get this genius on at Crossways Hall some Sunday and the critics say she's good—the good critics, mind you—I hear her. Otherwise—no."

Clough had to yield. He knew that Bittelman would carry out his often repeated threat to resign if he insisted. After all, Bittelman had been good to his proteges. The trouble was, Bittelman did not know that this time he had discovered a real